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City Document.—No. 116.

CITY OF BOSTON.



COMMUNICATION

FROM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

FOR

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS,

TRANSMITTING FURTHER INFORMATION RELATIVE TO

WINTHROP FARM

AS A SITE FOR A NEW

LUNATIC HOSPITAL. ✓

1869.

In Common Council, December 16, 1869.

Laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

Attest:

W. P. GREGG,

Clerk of the Common Council.

THE CITY OF BOSTON

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

1962

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the seal of the City of Boston, this 4th day of May, 1962.

JOHN J. CONNOLLY, Mayor

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JOHN J. CONNOLLY, Mayor

CITY OF BOSTON.

OFFICE OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS,
CITY HALL, BOSTON, December 16, 1869.

To the Honorable the City Council of Boston :

GENTLEMEN,—The Board of Directors for Public Institutions again transmit to the City Council certain information which has been received by them, in relation to the Winthrop Farm, as a site for a Lunatic Hospital.

An impression has obtained credence in the public mind, through newspaper contributions and letters from distinguished gentlemen, from which the inference has been drawn that the town of Winthrop is unfit for human habitation, or, if not entirely so, is objectionable on account of its sterile soil, and exposure to inclement weather.

The annexed communications from the town of Winthrop, signed by citizens who have long been residents of the place, exhibiting the peculiar fitness of the location for residence, or cultivation of soil, bears directly upon the question at issue.

The Board deem these to be of importance in view of the erroneous impression that the city government had purchased a location absolutely objectionable on account of sterility and exposure.

To secure the best possible site, the Board of Directors (through a committee) visited Mr. Emerson's place and spent several hours in the examination of it. Mr. Emerson showed

them his entire farm, pointed out its advantageous location, called attention to its production of shade and fruit trees, vines and vegetables, and generally extolled its rare adaptedness to the requirements of a hospital for the insane. Nothing was said in regard to the impossibility of occupying it in the winter season.

We subjoin letters from ex-Mayor Lincoln, and ex-Director Moses Kimball, in relation to the above visit.

We also transmit a note from the Codman heirs, dated June 19, 1865, offering the entire estate of the late Rev. Dr. Codman, including the mansion-house, farm-house, stable, barn, and seventy acres of land, for the sum of fifty-five thousand dollars.

Respectfully,

J. P. BRADLEE,

President of the Board of Directors for Public Institutions.

WINTHROP, December 14, 1869.

To the Board of Directors for Public Institutions, City of Boston :

GENTLEMEN, — The undersigned, a committee of the citizens of Winthrop, ask your attention to the following statement in reference to the subject-matter of the published reports and communications, in relation to the location of the New Lunatic Hospital, especially to the letter of Hon. Geo. B. Emerson, recently addressed to Mr. S. C. Cobb.

We take exceptions to the purport of that letter on the ground that it is not a fair and truthful statement of facts in the premises.

First. As to climate, we beg leave to refer you to the accompanying statement of the Board of Health.

Second. As to the soil and its productions, we have to say, we think they will compare favorably with those of most towns

in the Commonwealth. It is very certain that our farmers raise *good* crops, and that our fruit-trees are especially prolific. A farm located on Great Head, a bluff or headland quite as much exposed to storms and high winds as any part of the Winthrop Farm, is as productive as any farm in the vicinity of Boston; besides, splendid crops have been raised on the Winthrop Farm itself, and on some of its highest enclosures.

Years ago there was a beautiful and prolific apple orchard on the upper or higher portion of this same farm.

There were large forest-trees, which, unfortunately, have been cut down, a few of which, however, still remain.

As to water, there is a well on the old farm, which, in the driest times, has supplied, and does supply, the neighborhood and Point Shirley with water. Still further, there are three living springs of water on the highest lands of the same.

As to accessibility, there are several farm horses in town, that will draw a ton weight to the top of the highest hill on the premises.

Other points we might contrövert, but do not deem it important.

We will add, however, that as to cold winds, it is true that they are sometimes not only fresh, but strong; and where in Massachusetts or New England are they not?

We have one advantage, however, they are remarkably pure; vitiated in no respect by poisonous evaporations from any miasmatic sources.

Allow us to call your attention to the accompanying statements of some of our oldest and most reliable citizens.

Respectfully,

(Signed,) JOHN BELCHER, *Chairman,*
SAMUEL INGALLS, *Secretary,*

Citizens' Committee.

WINTHROP, December 14, 1869.

To the Board of Directors of the Public Institutions, City of Boston :

GENTLEMEN,—The Board of Health of the town of Winthrop, at the instance of the citizens of the town, invite your attention to the following statements in relation to the sanitary condition of the place.

We have read your report in regard to the Winthrop Farm as a site for the contemplated Lunatic Hospital, and also the minority report of Mr. Samuel C. Cobb; and still more recently the enlargement of Mr. Cobb's views by Dr. Geo. B. Emerson. While we do not wish to enter into any controversy in relation to the location of the hospital, we do desire to remove the false impressions which may have been made by Mr. Emerson's letter.

We have been residents of Winthrop many years, and our relations to the town have afforded us ample opportunities of knowing what we affirm.

As to the climate, it is a demonstrable fact that the weather is not so severe as in the city of Boston and most suburban towns. It is a fact that in our coldest weather the mercury indicates from five to ten degrees higher temperature than there or in Dorchester. It is a fact, moreover, that the temperature varies less here, both in winter and summer (being modified by the surrounding waters), than most localities in the vicinity of Boston.

As proof of this we cite a fact, which, with medical men especially, will have weight, viz: that diseases peculiar to severe and vacillating climates are not prevalent.

Pneumonia and other diseases of the lungs are quite rare; diphtheria very unusual.

Persons who have been subject to throat diseases elsewhere, are nearly exempt from them here.

This immunity from this class of diseases must be attributed

partly (if not chiefly) to the modified state of the air, together with its remarkable purity.

Other conditions, we are aware, lend their contributions to health, such as the undulating surface of the town, the peculiar dryness and porosity of the sub-soil, affording perfect under-drainage; the absence of miasmatic exhalations or poisonous evaporations from decompositions either vegetable or animal; the purity of the water; the beautiful and changing scenery, and the quiet, orderly, thrifty and cleanly habits of the people.

(Signed,)

JOHN BELCHER,

ALBERT RICHARDSON,

PHILLIPS P. FLOYD,

H. S. SOULE, M. D.,

SAM'L INGALLS, M. D.,

Board of Health of the Town of Winthrop.

WINTHROP, December 14, 1869.

This certifies that my orchard contains about eighty apple trees, which have been planted thirty years, and have borne fruit twenty years, averaging five bushels annually per tree.

My trees are very healthy, and the bark is smooth, although situated on the extreme easterly slope of the town.

I have also been very successful in raising shrubbery, forest and ornamental trees, of which I have a great variety.

My success has been mainly dependent upon the almost complete exemption of early and late frosts.

I believe the Winthrop farm is as well adapted, to say the least, to the growth of trees and shrubbery as my own farm, and I know the soil to be better.

(Signed,) JAMES M. BELCHER.

WINTHROP, December 14, 1869.

This certifies that my orchard joins the City farm on the west side, and is more exposed than any part of said farm, and bears well.

The orchard which belonged to my late brother Thomas Floyd, also joins the city farm, full as much exposed to wind and weather, and has always produced abundantly.

(Signed,) P. P. FLOYD.

BOSTON, December 13, 1869.

J. P. BRADLEE, ESQ.,

President Board of Directors, etc.

DEAR SIR, — In answer to yours of the 11th inst., I reply that, in company with a number of gentlemen connected with the government, I visited the estate of Mr. George B. Emerson, at Winthrop, for the purpose of examining it as a suitable location for the Lunatic Hospital. The visit was made at his invitation; and the price at which he offered the estate, thirty-one and a half acres (as I see by a memorandum made at the time) was twenty-six thousand dollars.

It was thought that his estate was not as large as would be required; and he suggested that Judge Loring's estate, which adjoins his own, could probably be purchased for the sum of eighteen thousand dollars.

The united estates would contain forty-four and one-half acres, and the total cost forty-four thousand dollars. The proprietor of the estate, at that time, thought that it was admirably adapted for hospital purposes, and interested his visitors by his comprehensive and liberal views as to the privileges which such a site would afford to the unfortunate inmates of the institution.

No immediate action followed this visit, as it was informal in character, and without authority; but subsequently the Board of Directors was authorized to advertise for eligible lots, which resulted, as is well known, in the selection of a larger site in the same town, which the City government purchased.

Yours, very truly,

(Signed,) F. W. LINCOLN, JR.

BOSTON, December 13, 1869.

J. P. BRADLEE, Esq.,

President, etc.

MY DEAR SIR, — Agreeably to the request, in yours of the 11th inst., that I would communicate to you "the circumstances attending your (my) visit to the estate of George B. Emerson, at Winthrop, when examining sites for a new Lunatic Hospital, and your (my) recollections of the same," I submit the following:—

At the time the Board of Directors were examining the numerous sites offered in response to an advertisement, we were informed by the Mayor that Mr. Emerson would sell his estate for that purpose. Accordingly, in company with several of the Directors, I visited the property twice. Not finding Mr. Emerson at home the first time, we had only the cursory examination of the property afforded by a ride across it, and round the house of Judge Loring. At a second visit, at which, with others, yourself, Mayor Lincoln, and Dr. Walker were of the party, Mr. Emerson was present, in accordance, as I have the impression, with a previous arrangement. He conducted us over the premises; showed us the boundaries of his estate, and

spoke of a right of way, belonging to Judge Loring, which ran through the territory near the middle of it. This last being an insuperable objection, occasioned considerable discussion as to whether Judge Loring's estate could be bought, and thus obviate the difficulty. Mr. Emerson thought that Mr. Loring would sell. We examined the land with reference to its fitness for agricultural purposes, and Mr. Emerson showed us the vegetables growing, commending their fineness; called attention to some grape vines and the fruit upon them, and to the trees and shrubbery as evidence of the excellence of the soil for their growth. We inquired of him in regard to the ownership of a large vacant lot next easterly to his land, and if he thought it could be procured. He thought it might be, and gave us the name of the owner. Upon leaving, so favorably were we impressed with the estate that we hoped arrangements might be made to secure it.

Subsequently, however, we went to visit Sale's Hill, in North Chelsea, and then first saw the Winthrop Farm, which had not been offered us. The location of it, and the lay of the land, pleased us, and it seemed to possess so many qualifications for the purpose for which we were seeking a site, that, after frequent visits to it, both in summer and winter, and extended inquiries of experts in the treatment of the insane, of agriculturalists as to the quality of the land, and of others whom we deemed best qualified to give an opinion as to its general fitness for our purpose, the Board abandoned thought of the Emerson estate and unanimously decided that the Winthrop Farm was the most desirable site that we had seen, and the very best that could be procured within a radius of six miles of the city.

I have not seen any reasons for changing that opinion.

Respectfully, &c.,

(Signed,) MOSES KIMBALL.

BOSTON, June 19, 1865.

SIR, — In accordance with your proposal, we offer you the estate in Dorchester, belonging to the heirs of the late Rev. Dr. Codman, comprising the mansion and farm-house, stable and barn, with seventy acres of land, for the price of fifty-five thousand (\$55,000) dollars.

JOHN CODMAN,

For the other heirs and himself.

Apply to Robert Codman, 27 Kilby street, for further particulars.

TO MOSES KIMBALL, ESQ.,

President of Board of Directors for Public Institutions.

